

The Holy Optimist

VOL. III

JOHN H. FRANCIS POLYTECHNIC HIGH SCHOOL

MARCH 2007

RECORD-SETTING SEASON COMES TO A CLOSE



Photo By Nicholas Coza/ Maxpreps.com

HOT HAND: Parrot point guard D.J. Gay led the Sunset Six league in points, threes, steals and assists during 9-1 season.

Not since '61 has a Poly basketball team reached the semi-finals of the City Playoffs. DJ Gay and company put Poly's '06-'07 squad in the record books.

By Daniel Jimenez
Optimist Staff Writer

Thursday, February 22nd. Semi-finals of the Los Angeles City Playoffs. The Sunset Six Champion Parrots found themselves in a low-scoring affair at Westchester.

Poly scored only 18 first-half points, nine in each quarter, but was still within eight at the half.

"That was the game plan. Keep it close, and give ourselves a chance," said head coach Brad Katz.

Katz's Parrots doubled their first half output with 36 points in the second and things seemed to be turning around.

"Whenever you fall down to the elite teams, it's hard to battle back. I think we showed our ability to come back. We had a definite shot to win that

game in the last few minutes," said Katz.

Poly found the key to their offense in that second half, but unfortunately so did the Comets, who matched the Parrots basket for basket. Westchester took the victory, 63-54, and advanced to the City finals to face Fairfax.

The defeat was one the team had to get over quickly, since they were to face Centennial of Corona in the first round of the CIF Regional playoffs on March 6th.

The Corona game was a much different story.

"The difference was, we were rested," Katz said. "We had almost 2 weeks off. We recovered, relaxed and we worked on some things. We had fresh legs, which allowed us to play at a much higher level."

The Parrots started Tuesday's game against the Huskies on a 12-0 run and never looked back. Lay-up after lay-up, Poly couldn't be stopped.

The closest the game ever got was late in the third quarter when the Huskies cut the Parrots' lead to eight. But the Corona run was too little and too late. The Parrots executed their game plan to perfection and won convincingly, 86-66.

"One of the best games we've had all year," said Katz. "A lot of people came out to watch. We played at a very high level against a team that was the champion of their division, so the fact that we were able to beat them was a great accomplishment for us."

Gay led all scorers with 43 points and handed out a play-off-high 11 assists. Santiago

[See Pasadena Page 4]

Wellesley Beckons Sicairos

Parrot Decathlon captain is offered 4-year scholarship from Massachusetts liberal arts school.

By Jennifer Rivera
Optimist Staff Writer

A-Track Senior Crystal Sicairos has been offered a four-year, full-ride scholarship to top-ranked Wellesley College, an all-girl liberal arts university in Massachusetts. Tuition and books, room and board and expenses there are approximately \$41,000 annually.

"It's a wonderful school. It may not be an Ivy League school, but it's one of the seven sisters," said Sicairos about her acceptance to the prestigious college.

"My family is very happy for me, ecstatic over the fact that I got into a good school," said Sicairos.

She gives them a lot of credit for helping her throughout her high school years.

"I have had a lot of luck and support from my family," Sicairos said.

Her friends have also en-



Photo by Jennifer Rivera

BICOASTAL: Senior Crystal Sicairos may be east coast coed.

couraged her to succeed in life and pursue her goals.

"My friends are very supportive," Sicairos said, "very proud of me and I'm very proud of them."

Sicairos praised many of the faculty as well.

"Ms. Carnovsky, she's been with me since 9th grade, and she's helped me so much, my writing, my reading, everything," said Sicairos. "The Decathlon was definitely a big part of my life here too, and Mr. Lehavi, Mr. Block and Ms. Kronstadt, who were my Decathlon coaches."

Like many college-bound

students, Sicairos has worked outside the classroom as well as in. She played on the basketball team for two years, was a member of the Academic Decathlon for three years, this year as captain, volunteered at Kaiser Permanente and was involved with Interact, Peer Mentors and CSF.

"Everyone applying (to schools) gets good grades, but they don't really base admission on that anymore. I think what's most important is what you've done outside the classroom. It is also based on your life experiences," said Sicairos.

As for studying, Sicairos says getting motivated to hit the books hasn't always come easy.

"At times it's very hard to motivate myself to study. I have to move the TV from my room and the CD player and put my books in front of me," said Sicairos.

"The decathlon has definitely helped me with my studying. I learned time management, how to prioritize and how to focus on certain sections," Sicairos added.

To relieve stress, Sicairos plays basketball, exercises

[See Sicairos Page 2]

"We Have A lot in Common" Cardenas Tells Seniors

By Kristal Pacheco
Optimist Staff Writer

City Councilman Antonio "Tony" Cardenas came to Poly with much more than scholarship money last month. He brought a message of hope and encouragement.

"We have a lot in common," he said, "and my success story can be yours too."

He urged his audience of Parrot seniors to take advantage of the more than \$25,000 his family's Cardenas Foundation was making available to Poly students.

"I understand how important financial aid is," Cardenas said, "and how important it is to send the message to lower-income families that the money is there."

Cardenas, who grew up in Pacoima, was one of 11 children raised by immigrant parents with little formal education.

"But my parents always told me how important education was," Cardenas said.

Cardenas attended San Fernando High School and later UC Santa Barbara's School of Engineering before eventually getting into politics. He was



Photo By Jose Peralta

ENCOURAGING: City Councilman Cardenas tells students to apply for money.

elected to the state Assembly in 1996 and the LA City Council in 2003, where he represents the 6th District.

"Some of your teachers may tell you you'll never make it," Cardenas said. "One of mine did. But I didn't listen to him."

During his senior year at San Fernando High, Cardenas had a math teacher who told him he could never make it as an engineering major at UCSB. But Cardenas proved him wrong. When he made the Dean's list his freshman year, he made a special trip back to his math teacher to tell him.

[See Scholarship Page 2]

Letters To The Editor

Talking Trash

Has anyone noticed how trashed our campus is from students throwing garbage around? All students need to respect their campus and take personal responsibility for their own trash. All this trash destroys our campus and our environment.

We need to have recycling bins to recycle all the newspapers, cans and bottles that are dumped daily in the trash or, worse yet, on the ground. Not only would we be saving out natural resources, but we

could make extra money for the students – for field trips, books, or scholarships.

Americans throw away 9 times more trash than Africa and Central America. One person, however, can make a difference, to save our rain forests, our oceans, our land, and our planet for future generations. We can all work together to keep our campus and our environments clean and beautiful.

Come on everyone – don't be trashy – RECYCLE!

- Ricardo Reyes, Armando Anaya and Eduardo Lopez

POLY OUT EARLY IN SCIENCE BOWL XV

By Vilma Diego
Optimist Staff Writer

Poly was eliminated in the early going of Science Bowl XV, sponsored by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP). North Hollywood's "A" team won the competition for the ninth time in ten years, with their "B" team coming in fourth behind Granada Hills and El Camino Real. The competition was held February 24 at

the John Ferraro Building, the LADWP's downtown headquarters.

The Parrots' "A" team won their first round against Chatsworth, but lost to Reseda in the second round.

Team B lost the first round to the Holy Martyrs.

David Lopez, Perry Nga, Abhishake Rohilla, Marqus Theodore and Kevin Yacharn composed the "A" team. The "B" team included Karen Aguilar, Julio Aquino, Jonas Calderon, Rimon Elkotbeid and Alex George.

The early competition included seven rounds, each lasting 30 minutes, followed by eight elimination rounds. Like the old College Bowl TV game show, each round consists of tossup questions, answered by individual team members, and a bonus question for the team with the most correct answers to tossup questions.

Poly's A and B teams met for two-hour practice sessions twice a week for six months before the February competition. But science teacher and Science Bowl coach Karen Bobrow says it wasn't enough.

"Our students needed to be more involved," Bobrow said, "and they needed to use more of their free time to study."

To avoid another early exit, Bobrow and the Science Bowl team members have already started preparing for next year's competition.

"I am going to make sure we work harder and do better next year," said Bobrow.

The first regional competition in Los Angeles was held in 1993. Today about 200 high school scholars participate in the competition annually.

Working With True Artists

By Jose Peralta
Optimist Staff Writer

Ever wonder where the murals come from, where they are produced, what skills it takes to put images on a wall or canvas? The Optimist sent a reporter to attend an AP Art class and find out what it's like to make art at Poly.



Photo By Jennifer Rivera

LAST MINUTE: Senior Jose Aguilar completes art project.

To enroll in the AP Art class, students need to get teacher approval of their portfolios or have previous drawing experience. Many of Loya students have entered competitions or art exhibits.

I was assigned to make an art piece of my own choosing. I decided to make a small island with landscape scenery. It had a large pirate boat, the beach had clean blue water and the trees were beautifully painted with pinstripes brushes. The students quickly showed me the difference between acrylic and tempera paint so I knew what to use.

I picked up my synthetic nylon brush and started painting. The canvas I used was homemade and inexpensive.

When my project was finished, the other students were friendly and complimentary about what I had produced.

Loya's AP Art students have a passion for their art and I was happy to be a part of their group for a day.

My great art adventure started on a Wednesday afternoon. I walked into art teacher Carlos Loya's 4th period AP Art class and was immediately amazed at how talented each and every one of these students are. They all had a goal to pursue with their unique talents.

I thought this class would be nothing but drawing and painting, but instead I saw students using top-of-the-line Apple Notebooks. I was fascinated by their skills at using Photoshop and Coral paint programs.

"We learn how to apply technology to our art pieces," senior Luis Huazano explained.

Each student chooses an art medium or technique to concentrate on and makes 12 art works using that option.

"My AP Art class is the only AP class that encourages students to be creative and original," said Loya.

Joe Parrot To Get Make-Over

By Tatiana Tejada & Francisco Ramirez
Optimist Staff Writers

Mickey Mouse had one. Batman too. Even the Simpsons needed some updating. Now it is Joe Parrot's turn.

Leadership is offering a \$100 prize for the best redesign of Poly's mascot, Joe. The award will be based on creativity and presentation. The updated mascot must retain the Poly blue and gold colors. Additional contest rules are posted in classrooms.

"The new Parrot logo will be phased in over time," said special ed teacher Barry Stockhamer, who is in charge of the contest, "and unveiled in different ways throughout



NEW LOOK: What will this old bird look like after some nipping and tucking and a new wardrobe? Stay tuned.

the school, including Poly's website home page."

Entries must be submitted to room 107 by March 31.

East Coast Coed

[Sicairos from Page 1]

and reads.

"Exercise is one of the best things because it helps you relieve a lot of tension. And I read a lot. I don't know why, but it helps me calm down. I do whatever I can," said Sicairos.

She summed up the high school experience in a few words.

"High school isn't that hard once you think about it, as long as you try to have fun with it," she said.

Sicairos wants to major in Chemistry or Molecular Biology to become a biomedical researcher.

"One of my cousins has been suffering from cancer for the last 3-4 years and I want to advance research, because seeing her go through that is heartbreaking," said Sicairos.

But Sicairos said she won't spend all her time in college studying.

"I want to do everything! I want to write, sing, dance, everything," she said.

And to fend off those cold winter nights, Sicairos is packing two pairs of blue pajamas with monkeys on them.

Money For College

[Scholarship from Page 1]

"Dare to dream and never to stop trying to reach your goals," was Cardenas' advice to Poly's seniors.

Cardenas said that his family created the Andres y Maria Cardenas Foundation in 1997 to provide scholarships for students at high schools in the east San Fernando Valley so they could realize their dreams like he had.

"If you want to go to college, you can go," Cardenas said. "I wish I would have had this project when I was in school."

The scholarships range from \$500 to \$2,500, with more than \$25,000 allocated specifically to Poly students.

To be eligible, seniors must be accepted or enrolled in a college, university or community college for fall 2007 and in attendance through spring 2008 as a full-time student.

Andres and Maria Cardenas came to California over 50 years ago.

THE POLY OPTIMIST

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LETTERS

Letters to the Editor are accepted and encouraged for topics relevant to our readers. Submitted letters must be typed or neatly printed in ink and must have the signature of the writer. Editors reserve the right to determine which issue the letter will be published in, and the right to edit the letter for grammar, length, and structure.

Corrections published in the following issue of the newspaper.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Poly Optimist adheres to the responsibility of a Free Student Press. It serves as a voice for the student body and the community. This newspaper accepts all the responsibilities inherent in being a free press. The Optimist staff strives to follow the Code of Ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists. Editorials are the opinion of individual staff writers, and not presented as news facts.

FOR DENNISON, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

In hot wars and cold, from Saigon to the Bering Strait, Dennison has seen it all from 20,000 feet.

By Antonio Partida
Optimist Staff Writer

Most students know Poly teacher Jack Dennison as the drafting and photography instructor. But that's not all there is to know about the man. The real story of Dennison's life is his love affair with airplanes, from his first Skyrainger to the 230-foot wingspan B-36, from the B-52 he flew on its way to the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile crisis to the Cessna he piloted in Vietnam during the pivotal year of 1968. It's been a wild ride.

Dennison grew up on a small farm in Marion, Ohio and handled the typical young boy's chores of feeding the livestock and clearing the fields. The farm, with its two-story home built in 1875, is still in the family. The land, purchased by the Dennison's for \$150 an acre, is now worth \$2,000 an acre.

But not all was typical on the Dennison farm: this family owned a tank. The Army surplus vehicle, purchased for \$650, had been modified for civilian use, the gun turret removed and a bench seat put in its place. The gear shift, gas pedal and steering mechanisms had been extended for use from the wooden seat. The transformed tank was ready to clear the fields of thorn trees and get the ground ready for farming.

Dennison recalls driving the tank to basketball practice at school one day and doing some damage to the yard when he tried to drive it home after a rainfall.

"There was no denying it," Dennison said. "We were the only ones who owned a tank. But it was a great toy."

Other than chores and sports, Dennison spent most of his time studying and considered himself a good student.

"I was in the top 10th of my class," Dennison noted. "Of course, there were only 10 students in my class."

Airplanes played a big role in his life early on. When he was young, a close friend of his father's would come over and tell aviation stories. Dennison was greatly intrigued.

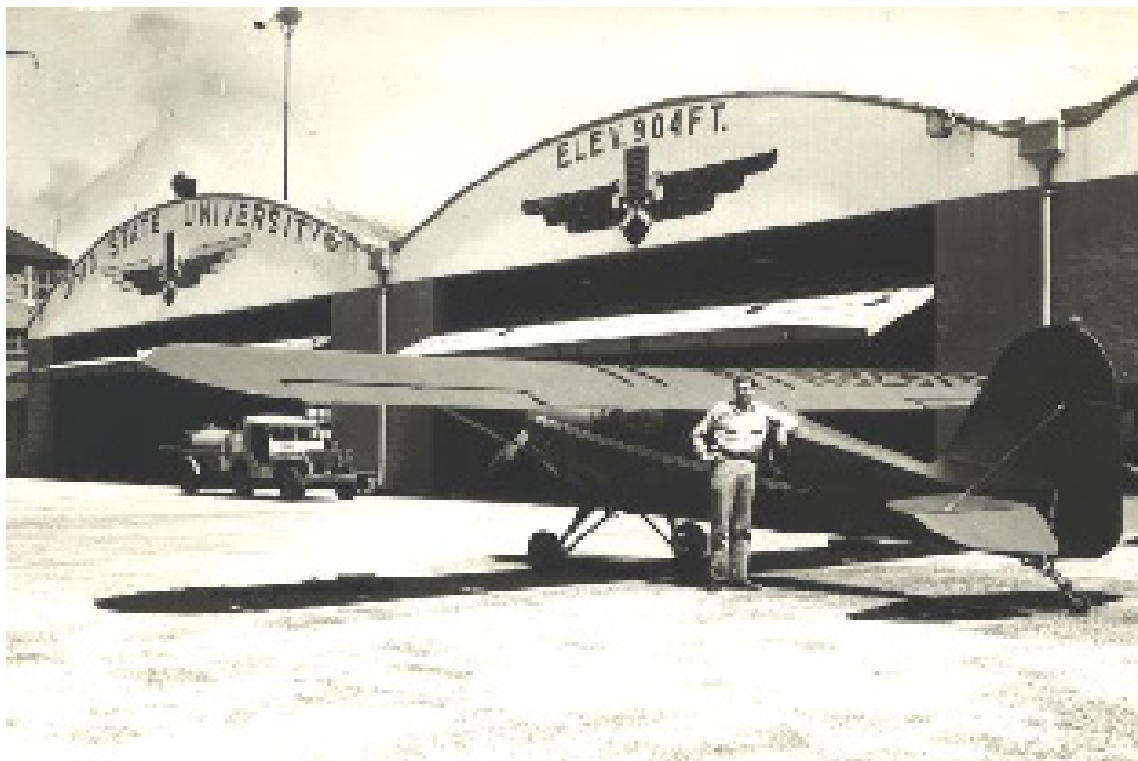


Photo Courtesy of Jack Dennison

TEXTBOOKS AND A SKYRANGER: *Transport of choice for Dennison during his stint at Ohio State was a Rearwin Skyrainger, shown here parked at the Ohio State Airport in 1948.*

At 18, Dennison decided he had to have his own plane. So he convinced his two younger brothers to chip in \$300 each and the three of them bought a used Rearwin Commonwealth Skyrainger for \$900. They parked it at the local airport and stored it for months while Dennison saved up enough money to take flying lessons.

Soon enough he was airborne and a landing strip was created for the plane on the Dennison farm. He occasionally flew the Skyrainger to classes at nearby Ohio State University, where he studied for a degree in agricultural engineering from 1948 to 1952.

One particular flight was quite memorable. Dennison had flown to Cincinnati to get his date for the University's military ball. Knowing the engine was sometimes difficult to start, he chose to feather the prop himself. He stood in front of the plane and yanked on the propeller, while his date was instructed to hold her foot on the brake until he could

get back in the cockpit. The engine started, but his date, caught by surprise, lost control of the plane.

The aircraft lurched forward and headed down the runway, his date frozen with fear. In their path was another plane, waiting to take off. Dennison ran after his aircraft, managed to get a hold of a wing strut and changed the plane's direction to avoid a collision. Then he inched his way inside and finally got the plane under control.

It was not the best way to begin a date. Ironically, the young lady ended up working for an airline as a dietician.

When he graduated, Dennison enlisted in the Air Force and underwent a year of pilot training at Vance AFB near Enid, Oklahoma. He was then transferred to Carswell Air Force base in Fort Worth, Texas. He met his wife Rosemary shortly thereafter and they were soon married.

Dennison and his friends loved flying and they had a

standard line they always used with each other.

"You mean we're getting paid to do this?"

In October of 1962, Dennison was stationed at Strategic Air Command (SAC) headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska. When the Cuban Missile Crisis began to unfold, Dennison was destined to be a part of it.

SAC practice was to keep ¼ of all B-52s airborne at all times in case of nuclear attack. Dennison and his B-52 crew were ordered to head for the Bering Strait and the Soviet Union on a flight that would last about 26 hours. His plane was armed with nuclear bombs. If the word came through to proceed, Dennison would bomb the Soviets and begin a nuclear war.

"We just hoped it didn't happen," recalled Dennison.

On one flight, his plane almost ran out of fuel. They were forced to make an emergency refueling stop in Oklahoma. Luckily, the plane made it and the Soviets backed down, narrowly avoiding a nuclear war.

In 1968, Dennison was sent to Vietnam, where U.S. and North Vietnamese forces had been fighting since 1964. He spent five months flying missions over Laos, at the time a secret mission, where his primary job was to locate enemy trucks on the Ho Chi Minh trail. Dennison would fly low in his twin-engine Cessna Skymaster, painted black for night missions, locate enemy truck convoys and "mark" them using rockets. U.S. fighter planes were then called in to destroy the targets.

While in Vietnam, Dennison enjoyed taking pictures. He photographed many of his friends and co-pilots. But

too many of them were being killed in combat.

"So I stopped taking pictures," he said.

Dennison had some close calls himself. While he was flying in the southern part of North Vietnam, he decided to fly through the low clouds. Suddenly North Vietnamese soldiers marching on the road began shooting up at him. From then on he decided to fly above the clouds.

On another occasion, Dennison was about to board a plane to do his rounds when he was called back to write a special classified report. Dennison reluctantly followed orders. That night the plane was shot down and the pilots killed. Dennison is thankful he did not get on the plane.

After his one-year tour of duty in Vietnam, Dennison returned to the states. When he left, things didn't look good for the U.S. effort, he said.

In 1980, Dennison resigned after 27 years in the Air Force as a full Colonel.

He then took a position with California Microwave of Woodland Hills as a program manager working with



Photo By Jennifer Rivera

STILL FLYING: *Dennison meets with fellow B-52 pilots every other year in Texas.*

unmanned aircraft and high tech equipment involved in signal intelligence. Many of the products his group worked with have today become mainstays in the war on terror. But when the Cold War began to thaw, California Microwave closed Dennison's division.

Dennison joined the Poly faculty in 1993. He teaches drafting and photography.

He enjoys teaching very much and recommends drafting for anyone who is looking for a background in engineering and landscaping.

Today Dennison, a retired Colonel and Silver Star recipient, still enjoys flying with friends.

Every other year, he flies to Fort Worth, Texas, where he meets with fellow B-52 and B-36 pilots to discuss old times.

"When I get up in the air, I still feel comfortable," he said.



Photo Courtesy of Jack Dennison

ANOTHER KIND OF CLASSROOM: *Dennison next to the North American T-6 Texan in which he first learned to fly. The T-6 was used to train thousands of pilots for 25 years.*

Season Ends In Pasadena

[Basketball from Page 1]

Moreno added 12 points and 8 rebounds.

Poly scored over 20 points in every quarter, dominating a formidable opponent. The Huskies came into the game at 29-4 and had not lost a game by more than 15 points all year.

After two days' rest, Poly filled up two more fan buses, and made their way down to Pasadena High School to face off against the Bulldogs of Pasadena (31-2), winners of 21 consecutive games.

"I mean they were huge, and they were a better team on that day."
-Brad Katz

The differences between the two teams were evident from the start. Number of Bulldogs over 6'4"? Five. Number of Parrots over 6'4"? Two: Justin Cubias and Santiago Moreno, who were just not enough to stop Pasadena's big men.

"That was the main thing against Pasadena, their size. I mean they were huge, and they were a better team on that day. Their athleticism was amazing. We only had one day to prepare for them, and we tried



Photo By Nicholas Coza/ Maxpreps.com

KATZ ON THE PROWL: Head coach Brad Katz led Poly to a third consecutive league championship and a 24-6 season.

hard to keep them off the glass but when they've got guys over 6'5" and 6'6", keeping them off the boards is a difficult thing to do," said Katz

The Parrots were down 47-26 at halftime, and until the fourth quarter didn't show any of what got them so far into the playoffs.

The Bulldogs also did something that no one has been able to do all year: stop DJ Gay.

Gay was held to 14 points on 4 of 24 shooting from the floor and three of six from the free throw line.

"The defense was good, and they knew he was our go-to guy. He had an off night; he didn't get into a rhythm," said Katz.

Gay and the Parrots fell 79-57.

The loss ended an incredible season for Poly, who hasn't gotten this far into the playoffs in over 40 years.

"It's a season that will forever be remembered here at Poly for the accomplishments that we were able to achieve," said Katz, "and for the recognition and respect we gained."

Perry Has a Passion For Tennis

By Karen Aguilar
 Optimist Staff Writer

"Tennis is both a physical and mental sport in my style of tennis. I look for my opponent's weakness, usually a less developed backhand, and then I attack. I look for gaps or opportunities where I can force a gap to open."

That, in short, is a junior and #1 singles Perry Nga's tennis philosophy.

"I usually try to get to the net to volley and put the ball away when I can," Nga said. "Volleying is my specialty and when I'm having the most fun. However, I always adapt to my opponent's game. If he is making many unforced errors, I'll lower the time I go for winners and just let him shoot himself in the foot.

Nga started playing ten-



Photo By Erick Robles

SERVE & VOLLEY: Junior Nga likes to play at the net.

nis the summer before his 9th grade year. His older brother and sister had been members of the Poly tennis team before and he was eager to see what all the fuss was about.

"I was #1 doubles my first year and the experience I

gained was tremendous. Overcoming nerves was hard, especially when up against players who have had private lessons," Nga remembered.

"I try to practice tennis as much as I can," Nga said, "from once a week to daily. If no one is available, I go outside and hit against the wall.

"My brother Peter and my friends Bemwell and Ken have taught me different styles of tennis and helped me find my own style. A former minor professional tennis player showed me flaws in my ground strokes, my volleys, my overall game," said Nga.

Nga plans to help the new players learn the game. He has devised drills that will help condition them and improve their strokes.

A straight "A" student, Nga says math and science are his favorite subjects.

Hernandez Holds Huskies Scoreless In 10-0 Opener

By Daniel Jimenez
 Optimist Staff Writer

The Parrot Varsity won their Sunset Six league baseball opener against North Hollywood with a seven run fifth-inning to turn a close game into a rout. The Mercy Rule, which calls for the game to be stopped after five innings if a team is ahead by at least 10 points, was then enforced by the plate umpire.

"It was nice to have won yesterday," said head coach Chuck Schwal. "We had been losing up late and it's always nice to beat your rival."

Senior Ernesto Hernandez, got the win after allowing just two hits and striking out nine in five shut-out innings. He threw 100 pitches, including 28 in the second and 30 in the fifth.

"He was a bit inconsistent, threw a lot of pitches, but the bottom line is he dominated the other hitters," Schwal noted.

The Parrots got to work in the fifth when catcher Oscar Soriano led off with a two run triple. After Huskie pitcher Manny Gutierrez walked a runner home, second baseman



Photo By Jennifer Rivera

NO MERCY : Parrot pitcher Ernesto Hernandez shackled Huskie hitters for a 10-0 win.

Cesar Ramos hit a base-clearing double and later scored the final run on a single by short-stop Juan Sanchez.

Poly, now 2-7 overall and 1-0 in league play, has dominated the Sunset Six league of late. Over the last two years, the Parrots are 30-1 against league opponents, their only loss coming against Verdugo Hills last year.

"We're looking to dominate the league again this year," Schwal said. "Grant's going to be tough, but we feel that we can continue winning against the league."

SPORTS ROUNDUP

GIRLS

SOFTBALL

3/20 vs Sylmar – rained out

Trinidad Tosses Shutout

Lady Parrot Jessica Trinidad threw five shutout innings as Poly coasted to a 15-0 win over the Huskies of North Hollywood. Valerie Tachias' grand slam was part of an 11-run 4th inning. The game was called after five innings.

BASKETBALL

F/S Parrots Victorious

Guard Natalie Barrera scored 16 points to lead the Parrot sophomores to a 51-23 victory over Van Nuys. The freshmen, led by Sarai Aquino's 18 points, won the first game 37-27.

BOYS

BASEBALL

Parrots Pound NoHo 13-5

Poly's varsity completed a sweep of North Hollywood with a 13-5 road win on Thursday. Gustavo Garcia got the win and third baseman Ricardo Valenzuela had three hits. The Parrots are now 3-7 and 2-0 in league play.

TENNIS

3/20 – vs North Hollywood – rained out/rescheduled

3/22 – Van Nuys 6 Poly 1

VOLLEYBALL

Volleyball Team Drops Pair

The boys varsity volleyball team lost to highly-ranked Van Nuys Tuesday 3-0 and fell to Grant on Thursday by the same score. Poly is now 2-2 on the year.